

**TITLE: SPORTS SHOE COVER****Field of the invention**

This invention related to a cover for a lace-up sports shoe, and to a sports shoe when fitted with such a cover. For the purposes of the present specification the term "sports shoe" refers to any item of footwear, including a boot.

**Background to the invention**

A sports shoe such as a football boot is typically held on the wearer's foot by means of laces which, when in use, are tensioned to draw the upper of the shoe against the foot. Where the shoe is for use in a sport that involves kicking the ball, the laces can become untied, and this can be hazardous for the wearer who may trip on the trailing ends of the untied laces. In addition, such shoes are prone to wear, which can be a problem as the shoes are often very expensive to replace.

US 6038792 shows a soccer shoe cover which includes a rubber membrane that is stretched over the whole of the shoe upper and held in position by fastenable straps. Although the cover overlays the laces of the shoe, fitting the cover to the shoe can be a cumbersome process in view of the need securely to fasten the straps.

DE 29800180 shows covers for a football boot which have straps that extend under the parts of the boot under the arch and ball of the foot, and is therefore similarly awkward to put on and remove.

A further problem of the known types of cover is that they generally detract from the appearance and/or prestige value of the boots to which they are applied.

### Summary of the invention

According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a cover for a lace-up football, the cover comprising a continuous, elastically expandable sleeve for stretching around the boot so that the boot extends through the sleeve with the toe of the boot protruding from the end of the sleeve, and that the underside of the sleeve engages the portion of the sole of the boot in the region between the heel and toe so that the sleeve grips the boot upper and said portion of the sole in such a way as to hold the sleeve in position on the boot, the sleeve also covering the boot laces to prevent the latter from untying.

The cover can be fitted to the shoe simply by passing it over the toe end and sliding it along the shoe until it is in the correct position. When so positioned, the elasticity of the cover will hold it in position. Thus, the cover can be relatively easily fitted (and removed) from the shoe.

Preferably, the cover so figured that, in use, it is held on a boot solely by the engagement of the sleeve with the boot. The cover may therefore be conveniently be constituted by said sleeve, which may conveniently be of a one piece construction.

Preferably, the sleeve is of a varying axial dimension around its circumference, with the top of the sleeve being longer than the sleeve bottom.

Then the top of the sleeve is so proportioned that, in use, it extends over the laces, the sleeve can properly cover the laces, whilst the bottom portion can extend just around the portion of the shoe sole in the region of the arch of foot so that it does not interfere with or snag on any formations, such as studs, on the heel or toe portion of the sole.

Preferably, the exterior of the top of the sleeve includes a zone the surface of which is rough, wherein when a ball is being kicked using the shoe with the cover fitted, the rough surface engages the ball to assist in control of the latter.

The surface provides an enhanced frictional interaction with the ball so as to make it easier for a wearer to control the direction in which a ball is kicked or to apply a spin to the ball so as to curve the trajectory of the kicked ball.

The roughness of the surface can result from the surface being textured, but is preferably the result of indented or embossed formations (for example nodules) on the surface. Preferably, the roughness of the surface is achieved by means of a multitude of embossed ribs arranged in a herringbone pattern. Alternatively the surface be provided with a multitude of linear indentations arranged in the same pattern.

Preferably, the zone is substantially in the centre of the top of the sleeve so that, in use, it overlies the laces of a boot on which the sleeve is fitted.

Preferably, the zone is one of three such zones, the other two zones flanking said zone.

Preferably, the sleeve includes fastening means for releaseably holding the tongue of the shoe.

It is currently fashionable for certain professional football boot players to fold down the tops of the tongues of their football boots. Players wishing to emulate this trait can more easily secure the tongue in the folded down position using the cover.

Preferably, the fastening means comprises a patch of filamentary hooks or eyes for engaging a complementary material on the tongue to provide a touch and close fastening between the cover and the tongue.

Alternatively, the patch could be of filamentary headed protuberances.

The sleeve is preferably formed from a water impermeable material so as to prevent the ingress of water into the boot around the edges of the tongue.

Preferably, the sleeve is constituted by moulded latex, conveniently of approximately 1mm -1.5mm thickness.

According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a cover for wearing on a football boot, wherein at least part of the cover is transparent. Such a cover preferably comprises a transparent sleeve which may, conveniently, be formed from an elastically expandable material, for example silicone.

The invention so lies in a sports shoe fitted with a cover as hereinabove described.

#### Brief description of the drawings

The invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a plan view of a cover in accordance with the invention the cover being for use with a child's football boot;

Figures 2 and 3 are side views and end views respectively of the cover shown in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is an isometric view of the cover when fitted to a football boot.

Figure 5 shows the boot with its tongue folded down onto the covering;

Figure 6 and 7 are views, respectively corresponding to figures 1 and 2, of a cover for use with an adult's boot.

### Detailed Description

With reference to Figures 1 and 2, a cover for a football boot comprises a sleeve 1 in the form of a band of a single piece of latex material of a thickness of approximately 1.0mm-1.5mm. The sleeve has a rear opening 2 and forward opening 4 formed at the periphery of the underside 5 and the top portion 6 of the cover. In use, the top portion 6 extends over the top and round the sides of the shoe as far as the sole, whilst the underside 5 extends across the mid region of the shoe's sole. As can be seen from figure 2, the sleeve is tapered from top to bottom so that the mid part of the cover 6 (referenced 8) is longer, in the axial direction of the sleeve, than the underside 5.

Cover 6 includes a central zone 10 comprising an array of ribs (for example rib 12) arranged in a raised herringbone pattern. Each rib projects a small distance from the underlying surface of the cover 6. The ribs are resiliently compressible, and as a result enable the cover to exert a high degree of frictional force on a ball in contact with the zone 10.

The zone 10 is flanked by two similarly ribbed side zones 14 and 16.. The ribs for all of the zones are formed in the same manner, for example, in the process of moulding the latex sleeve or by the subsequent etching or shot blasting of that surface.

A patch of fastening material 20 is attached to the top portion 6 of the cover at a central position (relative to the sleeve's circumference) and close to the opening 2. The material takes a form of a multitude of filamentary hooks which can matingly engage the material of the inside of a tongue of a football boot on which the sleeve is fitted. The material 20 therefore provides one half of a touch and close fastening with the tongue. The material for the patch 20 may, for example, be VELCRO™

The sleeve shown in figures 5-7 is identical to the sleeve of figure 1-3 in all respects, other than its size (as indicated on the drawings). Consequently, each of the referenced features

of the sleeve of figures 6 and 7 is denoted by the reference numeral used for the corresponding feature in the sleeve of figure 5 1-2

Both types of sleeves are intended for use with a football boot, such as a boot 58 shown in figures 4 and 5. The boot 58 has a toe portion on which a number of studs 60 are provided and a heel portion on which further studs, eg 62, are mounted. In order to fit the sleeve while on the boot 58, the sleeve 1 is stretched so that the toe of the boot 58 can be passed in through the opening 5, through the sleeve, to project out of the opening 4 as shown in figures 4 and 5. It will be appreciated that the sleeve needs to be manually stretched in order for it to be able to clear the studs 60. When the sleeve is positioned as shown in figures 4 and 5, the underside 5 extends across the central portion of the sole in a region, under the arch of the foot, in which no studs are provided. Releasing the sleeve 1 when it is at this position causes the elastic material of the sleeve to contract so that the sleeve fits snugly around the boot 58 with the top portion extending across the laces and down either side of the boot upper.

The sleeve then incorporates the sole means for retaining the cover on the boot, and avoids the need for any additional fastenings or straps. The cover can thus be easily fitted and removed, but is securely located when in use. In a modified embodiment of the invention, the sleeve is formed from transparent silicone so that markings (for example trade marks and other indicia or surface ornamentation) on the boot are visible through the sleeve. In this case, the rubbed zones 10, 14 and 16 may be integrally formed with the sleeves or may comprise initially separate stick-on patches. Such a sleeve can still carry trade mark material (for example printed on the sleeve) for the cover. In all other respects the sleeve is identical to that of the first embodiment.

Zones 10, 14 and 16 ensure more contact on the kicked ball and are situated in areas relevant to kicking/striking a football correctly. The cover is therefore a great benefit as a coaching aid. The increased contact on the ball means more friction, and this results in more curve, swerve, and control on the ball. The latex and silicone covers have two sizes,

Youth and Adult, and both have the same engraved pattern sited on the top and on either side of the foot, when the covers are fitted correctly.

The ribs of the zones 10, 14 and 16 allow mud, sand, grass and dirt to escape thus keeping the strike zone clear and able to work in the way they are intended.

The cover is a one piece band that fits comfortably between the stud configurations and cover the relevant parts of the foot for striking/kicking the ball correctly, and does not envelop the whole foot. The single band sits in between the stud configurations under the arch of the foot common to the majority of moulded studded boots, screw in studded boots and also boots with 'blades'/cleats studs.

The boot has a tongue 66 which has a fabric upper cover 68. The tongue can be folded down, as shown in figure 5, to bring the fabric into contact with the material 30, which this releasably holds the tongue in the folded down position shown in Figure 5.